

Simen river in the Sadiya Frontier Tract in Assam when the 'Gam' (Headman) of the village brought me an immature male pintail duck which was unable to fly due to moulting. This was in January so far as I remember and the Gam told me he had chased the duck and caught it with his hands when it was exhausted. He also mentioned that he frequently caught duck in this way during that time of the year. I kept the bird for a considerable time in company with a winged brahminy duck which I secured also but eventually they both died. Incidentally the smaller types of duck have not got separate names amongst the Abor tribesmen but the brahminy is called *Rāmking* while geese generally are called *Pemuir Puiong* and the general name for duck is *Pējāp*.

'HOPEDALE',  
SHILLONG, ASSAM.  
January 1, 1944.

R. E. PARSONS,  
*Indian Police.*

### XIII.—THE 'COURTSHIP' OF THE MONITOR LIZARD (*VARANUS MONITOR*).

(*With a plate*).

The accompanying photographs were taken by me at Chāduva in Kutch on August 17, 1943. The monitor lizards concerned were rather over 2 ft. long each. One of them, with the tail-tip missing, was the heftier of the two and the more aggressive. Him I assumed to be the male, the other the female. Ostensibly the lizards were engaged in an 'all-in' wrestling match, and many of their grips, catches and throws were surprisingly human. The commonest manœuvre was to stand up on their hindlegs, clasping each other firmly about the neck and shoulders, and then with a sharp sideways jerk of the head to knock the other down—sometimes tossing it completely over. The victor, who invariably happened to be the 'male', now appeared to try and twist the posterior end of the 'female' round into a position suitable for copulation. The struggle, which was interspersed with much bloodless biting on the neck behind the ear, lasted without result for over an hour and a half. Both combatants were panting heavily and were visibly exhausted. Occasional pauses occurred only when the female—who seemed to be more timid than the other—walked away upon my approaching closer with the camera. The male seemed unperturbed by my proximity, at one time under 4 feet. On these occasions the male did not follow or attempt to chase her but stalked slowly over the 'ring' nose to ground, body raised to full height, as if smelling. After retreating a few yards, and within the space of 2 or 3 minutes the female, though she had appeared to be having the worst of the encounters all along, returned to 'Hefty' and the bouts recommenced. This circumstance is enough to suggest that it could not have been a serious fight but some sort of rough courtship that was in progress. After the ungentle handling the female had received it is hard to imagine her returning to the fray of her own accord when she had such a glorious opportunity for escaping. Although 'Hefty' had apparently been

winning the whole time he was the first to show signs of exhaustion, and soon afterwards was completely done up. In the final stages the female took hold of his foreleg in her jaws and shook it violently from side to side two or three times, just as a terrier shakes a rat. Upon his still continuing inert she left him with what seemed a frustrated and disgusted sneer, eloquent of much damaging reflection upon his virility! She then deliberately waddled off up a sloping bank and into the shrubbery. It took some minutes for 'Hefty' to recover himself when he too walked away dejectedly in a different direction and with no attempt to follow her.

It would be interesting to learn from some one who has studied the habits of Monitor Lizards whether this was in fact some courtship proceeding and whether such ordinarily leads up to mating.

33, PALI HILL, BANDRA.

SALIM ALI.

December 7, 1943.

#### XIV.—THE BREEDING HABITS OF THE COBRA (*NAIA TRIPUDIANS* MERREM) AND THE GREEN WHIPSNAKE (*DRYOPHIS MYCTERIZANS*).

Among other snakes not dealt with in my earlier note on 'the Breeding Habits of Some Snakes'<sup>1</sup> there are two, the cobra and the green whipsnake, of which I have been subsequently able to collect some interesting data. With regard to the cobra, I find that there is some difference in the matter of the mating and the egg-laying seasons from those mentioned by Major Wall. Another feature I observed, and to my knowledge unrecorded, was that one of the female cobras swallowed some of its eggs.

One specimen in the zoo laid 13 eggs on March 5, 1943. Four days later, another one laid 22 eggs. Both these cobras have been kept in captivity for a long time and each had its mate in the same cage all along. Even at the time of the female voiding its eggs, the male snake was found coiled up along with it. It might be probable that the presence of the male is helpful to the other in getting out the eggs, since each egg was brought out by muscular action similar to that exerted by these reptiles in swallowing their prey.

This habit among cobras of association between male and female individuals during reproductive processes even after the fertilization of the ova has been observed among breeding cobras at the Belle Vue Zoological Gardens, Manchester.<sup>2</sup> There the male and the female have been recorded to take turns in incubating the eggs.

The eggs of the first snake in the present instance were of uniform size, whereas those in the other clutch were of different sizes. The cobras moved away from the clutch on the second day after laying. The eggs began to shrink on the third day. These snakes were kept in the cages with their eggs, and it was thus that the snake which laid 22 eggs happened to devour a dozen of them

<sup>1</sup> *J.B.N.H.S.*, vol. xlii, p. 553.

<sup>2</sup> *Proc. Zool. Soc.*, London (1931), p. 1413.